

Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 CAIRO 04377 011610Z

44

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 IGA-01 CIAE-00

COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 EB-07 FMC-02 INR-07 NSAE-00

CG-00 OFA-01 DLOS-05 PM-03 H-02 L-02 NSC-05 PA-02

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 OMB-01 SAJ-01 ACDA-10 IO-10

NEAE-00 /125 W

----- 123425

P R 011610Z MAY 75

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3683

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

UNCLAS CAIRO 4377

EMBASSIES REPEAT CONSULS AS DESIRED

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EALR EWWT EG

SUBJECT: REOPENING SUEZ CANAL

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1. ACCORDING TO SUEZ CANAL AUTHORITY DIRECTOR MASHHOUR,

SUEZ CANAL WILL BE OPENED FOR COMMERCIAL TRAFFIC ON JUNE 5 AS PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED BY PRESIDENT SADAT. FOR FIRST 15 DAYS OF CANAL OPERATION, VESSEL DRAFT WILL BE RESTRICTED TO 33 FEET AND CONVOYS WILL MOVE ONLY DURING DAYLIGHT HOURS. THERE WILL BE NO LIMITS ON TONNAGE OR LENGTH OF VESSELS.

2. FOLLOWING THE OPENING CEREMONIES ON JUNE 5, ONE CONVOY OF SHIPS WILL BE ALLOWED TO TRANSIT CANAL FROM PORT SAID MOVING SOUTHWARD. ON FOLLOWING DAY (JUNE 6) ONE CONVOY WILL PASS NORTHWARD. UNTIL ABOUT JUNE 20 NORTHBOUND AND SOUTHBOUND CONVOYS WILL ALTERNATE DAILY. THEREAFTER, THERE WILL BE ONE NON-STOP NORTHBOUND CONVOY EACH DAY AND TWO SOUTHBOUND CONVOYS WITH NIGHTTIME MOVEMENT PERMITTED AS NECESSARY.

3. THE INITIAL DRAFT RESTRICTION OF 33 FEET GRADUALLY WILL BE RELAXED UNTIL DRAFTS OF 38 FEET ARE PERMITTED. SCA DIRECTOR MASHHOUR INDICATED THAT CHANNEL COULD NOT ACCEPT DRAFTS GREATER THAN 33 FEET, BUT SCA PILOTS WISH GRADUALLY TO APPROACH MAXIMUM CAPABILITIES OF CANAL AS THEY REQUIRE REFAMILIARIZATION IN HANDLING SHIPS IN CANAL. PILOT FAMILIARIZATION WAS CITED BY MASHHOUR AS PRIMARY REASONS FOR RESTRICTING CANAL TRAFFIC DURING INITIAL 15 DAYS OPERATION TO DAYLIGHT HOURS. MASHHOUR ANTICIPATED THAT PERMITTED DRAFT PROBABLY WOULD BE INCREASED SOMEWHAT EACH 7-10 DAYS UNTIL WITHIN 6-10 WEEKS FULL DRAFT OF 38 FEET WOULD BE ALLOWED.

4. ASKED ABOUT TOLL SCHEDULES, MASHHOUR WOULD GIVE NO INDICATION OF ANTICIPATED RATES EXCEPT STATEMENT THAT RATE WILL BE "REASONABLE" AND THAT TRANSIT VIA CANAL WILL BE CHEAPER THAN ROUTING VIA CAPE. INFORMATION OF THIS GENERALITY OBVIOUSLY WILL BE OF NO ASSISTANCE TO SHIP OWNERS ATTEMPTING TO COMPUTE DESIRABILITY USING CANAL IN MARGINAL CASES.

5. MASHHOUR INDICATED THAT SCA HAD SUBMITTED RECOMMENDED RANGE OF TOLLS AND FEES TO MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE FOR APPROVAL. MASHHOUR HOPED MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE WOULD FOCUS ON THIS QUESTION DURING NEXT FEW DAYS.

6. COMMENT: DR. HASSAN ISMAIL, MEMBER OF COMMITTEE STUDYING TOLLS QUESTION, SAID COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED RATE UNCLASSIFIED

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ROUGHLY DOUBLE THAT PREVIOUSLY ASSESSED, FIGURED ON A FLAT RATE (I.E. REGARDLESS OF CARGO) BASIS.
EILTS

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NNN

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